

# PSYOP and the Warfighting CINC

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Printing newspaper  
for Cubans at  
Guantanamo.

U.S. Navy (Wendy Hamme)

## Summary

Psychological operations (PSYOP) is a multifaceted instrument of national power and influence that can deter or dissuade potential adversaries and reach a variety of audiences abroad in support of U.S. objectives. PSYOP can erode an enemy's will before the commitment of combat forces as well as facilitate humanitarian relief missions and the reconstitution of societies following conflicts. Economical yet very effective, it is extraordinarily adaptable in various regions and across diverse cultural and ethnic groups. To be efficacious in conflicts, PSYOP must be included in planning at the highest level from the outset; in peacetime, it merges with diplomacy, public affairs, and other tools of statecraft. Each service has organic capabilities to develop and furnish PSYOP products in support of joint force commanders. Much more than simply leaflets and loud-speakers, PSYOP in the final analysis can provide the warfighting CINC with an extremely imaginative and versatile force multiplier.

U.S. Navy (Wendy Hamme)

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**F**or Panamanian soldiers during Just Cause, U.S. psychological operations (PSYOP) was the voice of reason. In the Gulf War, PSYOP was millions of leaflets delivered by conventional means (artillery and aircraft) as well as more unusual ones (facsimile machines and bottles washed up on beaches). It meant 18 hours of daily Arabic broadcasts and 66 loudspeaker teams deployed at brigade level with coalition forces. For the Kurds in Provide Comfort, PSYOP was multifaceted media support of humanitarian relief. In Restore Hope, PSYOP was radio and press—known as *Rajo* (Hope)—that offered credible information to some 100,000 Somalis; and it was seven million leaflets that disseminated guidance on lessening anarchy and receiving aid. It was communication via tactical loudspeaker teams accompanying Army and Marine units as well as coalition forces. To U.S. diplomats in Central and South America and the Caribbean, PSYOP is an effective tool in drug interdiction and eradication, medical and engineer support, public information, disaster relief, the formation of professional armies, and promoting democracy. In former war-torn nations, it is an educational vehicle to publicize landmine awareness in schools and villages.

PSYOP therefore represents different things to disparate audiences, circumscribed only by the ingenuity of a commander. Implemented on the strategic, operational, and tactical levels, it is more than leaflets and loudspeakers. It can be written, aural, and audiovisual, and take the form of action, advice, suggestion, common sense, and notably, truth. At a time of decreasing deployments, declining force structures, intermittent presence overseas, reduced security assistance, and growing demands on U.S. engagement, PSYOP is more important than ever. It is an asset in peace, war, and operations other than war

(OOTW). Low-cost and high-impact, it is an instrument that can directly reach adversaries as well as other foreign audiences. In addition, PSYOP plays an indirect role by focusing the efforts of the U.S. Government—as well as allies, friends, and international organizations—on defusing crises, containing conflicts, or if deterrence fails, defeating an enemy in the shortest time with the least loss of life.

### Capabilities

Before describing support to joint commanders, four kinds of PSYOP—namely, strategic, operational, tactical, and consolidation—must be defined. *Strategic* PSYOP includes international information activities to influence foreign attitudes which support U.S. objectives. It is carried out largely by civilian agencies but may utilize or be supported by military PSYOP assets. *Operational* PSYOP occurs prior to war, during war or OOTW, and at the end of operations in defined regions; it promotes campaign effectiveness. *Tactical* PSYOP is mounted in areas assigned to commanders in war or OOTW and supports tactical missions against opposing forces. *Consolidation* PSYOP is executed in foreign areas inhabited by enemy or hostile populations and occupied by U.S. forces, or in areas where U.S. forces are based.

The Armed Forces have capabilities to support national objectives with organic assets that can produce and disseminate PSYOP products. The Army has both active and Reserve component units to support training, conduct planning, and furnish advice. They are equipped and trained to execute strategic, operational, and tactical level PSYOP; support special operations; and carry out consolidation missions. Specifically trained units also support enemy prisoner of war missions. These units are assigned to the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (USACAPOC), a major subordinate command of U.S. Army Special Operations Command.

Navy capabilities to produce audiovisual products are made available by Fleet Audiovisual Command, Pacific; Fleet Imagery Command, Atlantic; Fleet Combat Camera Groups; various film libraries; and Naval Imaging Command. A Naval Reserve audiovisual unit supports Atlantic Fleet. Fleet Tactical Readiness Group provides equipment and

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Joint Combat Camera Center (Raymond T. Conway)

UH-60 dropping  
leaflets during Cobra  
Gold '94.

technical maintenance support to conduct civil radio broadcasts, jam the AM frequency band, and respond to real-world missions and natural disasters. Navy assets have the ability to create documents, posters, articles, and other products. Capabilities ashore and afloat also can produce printed material.

The Marines have the capability to execute observable actions in support of psychological objectives through shore-based loudspeaker broadcasting, aerial leaflet dissemination, combat camera documentation, and use of motion picture projection and viewing equipment.

The Air Force has aircraft capable of supporting PSYOP across the operational continuum including several types specifically modified for this role. Air Force Special Operations Command is equipped with various aircraft for broadcasting and dropping leaflets. Four

EC-130 Commando Solo aircraft of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard have PSYOP as a primary mission and can broadcast radio and television signals worldwide. An MC-130 Combat Talon force—based in the conti-

ental United States, Europe, and the Pacific—is equipped for leaflet operations. In addition to specialized assets, most aircraft can conduct PSYOP missions. For example, conventional airlift C-130s or rescue HC-130s can be configured to drop leaflets, and strike aircraft can dispense leaflets with M-129 leaflet bombs. Moreover, strike aircraft can conduct specific attack missions designed to dramatically reinforce messages presented by broadcasts, leaflets, etc.

PSYOP-related interagency support to commanders is normally accessed through CINC-approved strategic PSYOP or external information plans which are reviewed by unified command or JTF staffs. Through these documents the representatives of the National Command Authorities, Departments of State and Defense, U.S. Information Agency, Central Intelligence Agency, et

al. provide political and other forms of support for joint commanders.

### Allocating Forces

Joint planning documents call for 4<sup>th</sup> PSYOP Group (Airborne), which is assigned to USACAPOC, to provide contingency support worldwide, normally through a PSYOP Task Force (POTF) under a joint commander. Based on the size of an operation, POTF headquarters are formed either from 4<sup>th</sup> Group headquarters for large operations or a regional PSYOP battalion headquarters for smaller ones. POTFs consist of regional, tactical, and dissemination assets, as well as enemy prisoner of war and Air Force and Navy capabilities as required. With the addition of assets from other services, such task forces are designated JPOTFs. Commanders of POTFs direct, coordinate, and deconflict theater or JTF PSYOP plans. Regional assets are retained at theater or JTF level while tactical assets may be attached to supported maneuver units as appropriate.

In peacetime, Reserve PSYOP units participate with active forces in integrated planning and training to prepare for regional conflicts or contingencies. In wartime, the Reserve component will mobilize and deploy the necessary forces to augment the active POTF and continue peacetime PSYOP programs in the absence of active forces. The Reserve will also task organize, mobilize, and deploy a POTF should a second regional contingency arise.

With recent changes in force structure and mission realignment, Reserve PSYOP groups are no longer aligned with or responsible for supporting specific theaters. Instead, 4<sup>th</sup> Group—the only active component group—is responsible for coordinating both active and Reserve support to CINCs with planning in peacetime, contingency operations, and war. To facilitate this effort there are forward detachments with three unified commands and Combined Forces Command (CFC) in Korea which provide J-3s with access to PSYOP expertise and capabilities.

### Command and Control

Joint and service doctrine incorporates major PSYOP lessons from Panama and the Persian Gulf War and has been validated during recent contingency operations. The key

**forward detachments with unified commands provide J-3s with PSYOP expertise and capabilities**

principle is that all planning must be centralized at the highest levels because of the strategic and operational role of PSYOP to CINCs. POTFs work for CINCs and JTFs are formed for joint commanders through J-3s. POTFs are usually separate JTF components, like service and special operations, and do not come under the command and control of special operations forces (SOF) component commanders (unless the Joint Special Operations Task Force commander is senior).

PSYOP is critical in command and control warfare which is the integrated use of operations security, military deception, PSYOP, electronic warfare, and physical destruction, supported by intelligence, to influence, degrade, destroy, or deny information to adversary command and control capabilities and to protect friendly command and control against such actions. The employment of these separate disciplines is designed to cause an enemy to react in a manner deemed advantageous to achieve U.S. objectives. Integrating PSYOP with C<sup>2</sup>W planning from the outset will facilitate coordination with other components and ensure effectiveness by eliminating inconsistencies among the various elements. PSYOP is also the bridge to public diplomacy.

Taken together, direct PSYOP support to warfighting CINCs and JTF commanders and its integral relation to C<sup>2</sup>W may warrant serious consideration for inclusion as part of C<sup>2</sup> Battlefield Operating Systems rather than a subset of fire support. Its increased importance along with other conduits may also justify the creation of new information systems.

### **Campaign Planning**

Driven by national and theater objectives as well as imperatives from a thorough mission analysis, a PSYOP campaign involves conducting programs, integrated with a CINC's operational plan, to achieve psychological objectives in support of the CINC's campaign objectives. In sum, it is sequencing and executing myriad activities designed to get measurable responses from specific target audiences. The desired result of the campaign's many thousands of distinct responses is the creation of conditions that will facilitate mission accomplishment for a supported commander.

In peacetime and OOTW, PSYOP campaigns that support CINCs take the form of an overt peacetime PSYOP program (P<sup>3</sup>). CINCs plan and conduct P<sup>3</sup> to support objectives, interests, and theater plans in coordination with chiefs of mission. Programs are proposed by CINCs through CJCS who, in turn, refers them to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict for review and approval.

During contingencies, a PSYOP concept plan which is broad in scope is forwarded from the CINC to the Joint Staff for approval of overarching themes, objectives, and guidance, but not products. While the time required to get approval during Desert Shield was literally months, recent operations such as Restore Hope saw approval time reduced to a few days. Once the concept plan is approved, a more detailed theater campaign plan is developed along with supporting appendices. This plan and the resulting programs and products are approved by the joint commander and apply throughout the area of operations.

### **From Peace to War**

To assist in day-to-day peacetime planning, each unified command (save for EUCOM) has permanently assigned PSYOP staff officers. As previously mentioned, 4<sup>th</sup> PSYOP Group also has forward support detachments at EUCOM, SOUTHCOM, PACOM, and CFC Korea headquarters. In coordination with regionally-oriented tactical battalions that routinely deploy to the theater, these 4<sup>th</sup> Group personnel are responsible for ensuring the currency of OPLANs and CONPLANS, facilitating the conduct of peacetime PSYOP programs, and coordinating exercise and crisis response support. Taking advantage of the Army's Redtrain program as well as other live environment training opportunities, those soldiers have also served with U.S. country teams in more than thirty countries in recent years. They have made unique contributions to achieving theater objectives under the guidance and direction of ambassadors, defense attachés, and officials. Finally, through a DIA-sponsored and CINCSOC-managed PSYOP studies program, CINCs and interagency users can access PSYOP expertise for peacetime and contingency-related analyses of situations in selected countries or regions.



**PSYOP can assist in dissuading a potential adversary from taking actions inimical to the national interest**

While P<sup>3</sup>s are conducted with varying levels of support, there is a lack of a multifaceted, coordinated theater information strategy for unified commands to effectively leverage all available information assets. Theater strategies can be developed together with the CINC's political advisor, U.S. Information Service representative, and strategy and plans, intelligence, public affairs, staff judge advocate, and PSYOP officers. Information strategy must concentrate on proactive versus reactive efforts to: reduce sources of conflict; assist nations in the transition to democracy; increase international dialogue and understanding; build political,

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PSYOP officers assigned to the Joint Staff bridge interagency public diplomacy efforts as well as special efforts by other governmental agencies. PSYOP civilian and military planners can offer expertise and ensure coordination and synergy. As previously mentioned, through theater-approved strategic PSYOP or external information plans, CINCs can provide input that is region-specific to the national level. PSYOP Assessment Teams (POATs) can also deploy to unified commands to help develop such plans.

During an initial projection of combat power—by land, sea, or air—PSYOP is an important tool. Driven by national level guidance, integrated early in the planning process, augmented by the basis of a request from a CINC or JTF commander to JCS or SOCOM, and integrated with C<sup>2</sup>W, especially in support of deception planning and conditioning, PSYOP can magnify existing combat power, overcome potential vulnerabilities, and convey U.S. intentions.

Recent operations reveal that the most effective way to ensure the availability and adequate preparation of PSYOP assets occurs when joint commanders request activation of POTFs under their OPCON. This allows for rapid deployment and, if necessary, incremental augmentation of a POAT that is in theater. Beginning PSYOP and information preparation of the battlefield early is essential. Considerable work is required before additional combat power arrives. Prepositioning assets—up front in the time-phased force and deployment data—is critical to conducting PSYOP immediately on receipt of an execute order. The Commando Solo aircraft of the Air Force 193<sup>d</sup> Special Operations Group are vital to joint commanders, enabling them to broadcast TV as well as AM, FM, and SW radio messages. Ground-based broadcast assets can augment these efforts on arrival. When authorized, a variety of leaflets is used, with themes from dissuasion and deadlines to safe conduct passes, coalition superiority, and surrender appeals. Tailored leaflets also significantly enhance the vulnerability of enemy concentrations. As the size of the commitment increases, additional tactical forces (including Reserve units) must be added to a POTF. In every instance, PSYOP-trained or supporting coalition expertise and forces are essential to maximize the overall impact.



U.S. Navy (Terry Mitchell)

Mobile loudspeakers in Somali market.

economic, military, medical, commercial, social, and educational bridges; limit the motivation and perceived legitimacy of those who possess weapons of mass destruction; emphasize the role of the military in a democracy; and highlight the constructive domestic uses of the military. The goals for theaters include information strategies, continuous coordinating mechanisms, and information crisis action teams to help defuse, contain, mitigate, or resolve unanticipated crises.

Planned and broadly implemented at the strategic level, PSYOP can assist in deterring or dissuading a potential adversary from taking actions inimical to national interests.

### Combat Operations

During combat operations, PSYOP is a proven force multiplier, synchronized with land, sea, air, and special operations. Controlled through command channels and integrated by J-3, it magnifies U.S. and coalition combat power, especially in support of C<sup>2</sup>W, and degrades enemy combat power by persuading air defense units not to engage, air forces not to fly, and ground forces not to use their weapons—but instead to desert, defect, or surrender. In addition, PSYOP encourages civilians to escape advancing coalition forces (thereby clogging major supply routes). In conjunction with military police and interrogators, PSYOP specialists exploit prisoners of war, using volunteers to record radio and loudspeaker appeals to their compatriots.

As the tactical situation changes, PSYOP assets at corps and division level may need to be relocated. Such decisions are handled via command, not PSYOP channels. Corps-size echelons have PSYOP support elements to conduct planning and monitor subordinate tactical units.

PSYOP guidance and specified tasks pass through G3/S3 channels as part of the plans and orders process. Divisions have PSYOP support elements that coordinate with POTFs to meet the requirements of commanders. Since commanders normally will not have product approval authority, requests for products must be submitted to POTFs for approval by CINCs or JTF commanders. Brigades have PSYOP support elements consisting of three- to four-man headquarters and three to five tactical loudspeaker teams with three personnel each.

Coalition success, significant enemy loss or miscue, and indications of allied determination can be stressed by local, regional, and international PSYOP, public diplomacy, and public affairs. This can accelerate the collapse of an enemy with minimum collateral damage and loss of life.

During combat operations, PSYOP planners must prepare for what happens after hostilities end. Long-term U.S. interests are not well served if we do not think through the requirements and are ill-prepared to restore stability. A good plan developed beforehand can ensure that a long-term military

presence is not needed and that there are coalition partners available to help bear the burden. Promote Liberty in Panama, Task Force Freedom in Kuwait, the first year of Provide Comfort in Northern Iraq, and JTF-Southwest Asia all provide innovative illustrations of PSYOP in support of post-combat endeavors.

Based on experience over the last few years, what lessons can joint commanders draw? First, while the number of PSYOP personnel permanently deployed in various theaters is low, they provide access to a range of capabilities and expertise in peacetime, crisis, and war. They must be actively leveraged. Second, DOD-mandated peacetime PSYOP programs, which offer imaginative ways to further theater and national objectives, must be robust. Third, strategic PSYOP—engaged in concert with statecraft, public diplomacy, public affairs, and other activities—can defuse, deter, and contain conflict, encourage allied contributions, and influence target audiences both inside and outside a given area of conflict. The coordination of informational strategy results in synergy of the highest order. Next, early integration of PSYOP in the planning process and early deployment are critical. Prior to the arrival of combat forces, PSYOP assets can direct influential information at audiences in a zone of conflict. If the forces arrive late, they are of little value to a commander on the ground. Fifth, PSYOP is a force multiplier that yields a high return for a small investment. Always joint, combined, and multiagency, PSYOP supports conventional, unconventional, and coalition forces. Last, PSYOP forms an integral part of military operations and, as such, is the inherent responsibility of every commander. In sum, PSYOP is a proven combat multiplier and peacetime contributor to U.S. national security strategy.

**JFQ**

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